



Smithsonian
***Donald W. Reynolds Center for
American Art and Portraiture***

***National Portrait Gallery
Smithsonian American Art Museum***

News

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Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery Now Open

The National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum welcomed home their treasured collections to a newly restored historic building in Washington July 1. Among the thousands of artworks that returned to public view in the nation's capital are the famous "Lansdowne" portrait of George Washington, portraits of notable Americans such as Marilyn Monroe and Shaquille O'Neal, large-scale video installations by Nam June Paik, and paintings by Edward Hopper and Georgia O'Keeffe.

The building that houses the two museums has undergone an extensive renovation that showcases its most dramatic architectural features, including skylights, a curving double staircase, porticos and vaulted galleries illuminated by natural light. The museums, located on a two-city block site between Seventh and Ninth streets and between F and G streets N.W., are the cultural centerpiece of a revitalized downtown Washington.

The museums are known collectively as the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture, in honor of their largest donor, the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

New Features and Enhancements to the Building

The National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum share a main entrance on F Street; the G Street entrance serves tour groups and provides access to the shared museum stores and to exhibitions. Two innovative and bold new public spaces—the Lunder Conservation Center and the Luce Foundation Center for American Art—provide new ways to experience American art and portraiture.

- Lunder Conservation Center—the first art conservation facility in the United States that allows the public permanent behind-the-scenes views of the museums' preservation work. Conservation staff from both museums are visible to the public through floor-to-ceiling glass walls.

- Luce Foundation Center for American Art—the first visible art storage and study center in Washington, which features more than 3,300 objects from the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s permanent collection in secure glass cases.

On View

The Smithsonian American Art Museum’s permanent collection is featured in six installations, including “American Experience,” “American Art through 1940” and contemporary works in the Lincoln Gallery. In addition to the permanent installations, the museum also presents many temporary exhibitions, including “William H. Johnson’s World on Paper” (closing Jan. 7, 2007) and “Passing Time: The Art of William Christenberry” (closing July 8, 2007). For more information about temporary exhibitions, visit www.americanart.si.edu.

The National Portrait Gallery presents six permanent exhibitions including the expanded “America’s Presidents” as well as “American Origins, 1600-1900,” and “20th-Century Americans” featuring famous sports figures and entertainers. Also, the gallery features temporary exhibitions such as “Portraiture Now” (closing Jan. 7, 2007), “Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition 2006” (closing Feb. 19, 2007) and “The Presidency and the Cold War” (closing July 8, 2007). For more information about temporary exhibitions, visit www.npg.si.edu.

An exhibition on the history of the building that is co-organized by the two museums, “Temple of Invention: History of a National Landmark,” is on view through July 8, 2007.

About the Museums

The National Portrait Gallery was established by an Act of Congress in 1962 and opened to the public in 1968. It is the only museum of its kind in the United States to combine the aspects of American history, biography and art. The museum’s collection of nearly 20,000 works ranges from paintings and sculpture to photographs and drawings.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum, the nation’s first collection of American art, is an unparalleled record of the American experience. The collection celebrates the vision and creativity of Americans with approximately 41,000 artworks in all media spanning more than three centuries.

The Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery are housed in the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture at Eighth and F streets N.W., Washington, D.C. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 357-1729 (TTY). Web sites: www.npg.si.edu, www.americanart.si.edu and www.reynoldscenter.org.

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Note to editors: High-resolution images are available at <http://newsdesk.si.edu/photos>.